

# France: Macron wins presidency but left can fight back in the 'third round' in elections and the streets

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**Dave Kellaway provides his initial analysis of the French presidential election result.**

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Macron won a comfortable victory in the second round of the French presidential elections with a lead of 17 percentage points which was at least 5 points better than any of the final polls. The last president to get a second term was Chirac in 2002. But his victory is at least 8 points worse than 2017 with Marine Le Pen's increasing her vote by the same amount. Macron lost several million votes, abstention increased by more than two points and the spoilt or blank vote score remained high at 9% (a fall of nearly 3%). To go to the polling station and actually spoil one's ballot is not the same as just staying at home; it expresses a more active political disaffection from the choices available.

## Results Ministry of interior

Name	Votes	% registered voters	% votes cast
Emmanuel MACRON	18 779 641	38,52	58,54
Marine LE PEN	13 297 760	27,28	41,46

	Number	% registered voters	% votes cast
Registered voters	48 752 500		
Abstentions	13 656 109	28,01	
Voters	35 096 391	71,99	
Blank ballots	2 228 044	4,57	6,35
Invalid ballots	790 946	1,62	2,25
Expressed	32 077 401	65,80	91,40

*Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding to two decimal places.*

Even last time Macron benefitted from those who voted for him purely to stop Le Pen's far right party gaining the presidency. But in 2022 he has lost a significant amount of the enthusiastic

support for what was supposed to be the youngest ever president who was a new face with a modernising movement outside the traditional parties. Demonstrations against Macron have already taken place in Paris, Lyon, Rennes, Nantes and Marseilles. In some places the police have intervened with tear gas and baton charges. The size of the victory rally in front of the Tour Eiffel hardly seemed to convey a mass wave of enthusiasm for Macron. On the other hands the neo-liberal extreme centre that leads most of Europe have been loud in their 'relief' and support for Macron.

## **Creeping fascism**

One statistic we need to keep at the front of our minds is 12 million versus 5 million. Marine Le Pen represents a clear sign of what our current has defined as creeping fascism. Le Pen and Zemmour have helped to push the centre of gravity of French politics to the right. Macron himself has made all sorts of openings to the far right over his five year mandate:

- He gave an interview to Valeurs actuelles, a very right wing magazine.
- He praised Petain, the war time collaborative leader, as a great soldier.
- Gerald Darmain, his home secretary, was encouraged to say Le Pen was a bit soft on immigration.
- He called Éric Zemmour to commiserate after the fascist was yelled at in the street.
- He denounced what he called 'islamo-gauchisme' (Islamic leftism) in the universities.
- He cultivated friendships with the royalist Philippe de Villiers and the reactionary Christian Estrosi who denounces the 'Islamic fascist fifth columns' in France.
- Marion Maréchal, from the Le Pen clan and Zemmour supporter' was invited to lunch at the Elysee.

On top of that de-demonisation of the far right he had adopted a law on separatism which stigmatised the Islamic community and organised some of the most repressive police operations against the Gilet Jaunes, refugees at Calais and other protests. The failure to carry out promised measures to help working people and the poor has pushed many into the arms of Le Pen who has developed a whole demagogy around social measures. For example his plans to increase the pension age was opposed by Le Pen.

Despite a third defeat in a row for her candidature Le Pen has come the closest yet to winning a western European government for the far right. Some commentators, even on the left, believed that the maverick, more openly fascist candidate, Zemmour, would fatally destroy her movement. In fact Le Pen saw him off quite effectively and benefitted from him bringing in voters that perhaps would not have been there for her in the second round. She is still in a strong position to lead any political re-composition on the right - the Republicans (LR), the mainstream party of the right, are in total disarray after their historically low score in the first round. Her big problem going into the parliamentary elections is that unless there were an unlikely agreement with the LR or other right wing currents it is very hard to win seats. The RN won no seats in 2017.

Between the two rounds there was an effort from the left and the labour movement to organise mass demonstrations against Le Pen so that everything was not reduced to just blocking Le Pen at the ballot box. Some school students in Paris voiced their anger at the lack of choice on offer by closing down their schools. Twenty thousand or so marched in Paris with smaller demonstrations in many

other cities. However we have to remember that in 2002 a million people marched on May 1 in Paris against Jean Marie Le Pen.

Some debate on the left took place about whether to simply hold your nose and vote for Macron or to use the formula adopted by Jean Luc Mélenchon and the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) of 'not a single vote' for Le Pen. First indications suggest that although some Mélenchon voters may have voted for Le Pen today, this was a minority – the overwhelming majority voted Macron, spoilt their ballot or abstained. If the polls had been a lot closer then the issue would have been posed differently. As it turns out by not leaping into a simplistic 'republican front' to support Macron the broad radical left have put the focus on continuing to oppose the policies of Macron's government. The left has to weaken his current as much as possible in the upcoming parliamentary elections that traditionally gives the Presidential winner a good working majority.

## **Stopping Macron in the June parliamentary elections**

Mélenchon reminded everyone tonight that the third round begins now. Never slow in coming forward, his project is for the left to come together and win enough seats for him to become prime minister and thereby be in a position to block Macron's anti-working class measures. In spite of getting around 20% in 2017 his movement only got 17 MPs elected. His advance this time and the two percent score for the Socialist Party (PS) makes him even more the natural leader of the left. The more leftish, ecological and anti-racist campaign he ran this time – dropping the tricolour and some of his worst national identity rhetoric – has put him in a better position of getting an alliance with the Communist Party (PCF), Greens (EELV) and the NPA.

At the moment their spokespeople have excluded reaching out to the 'neo-liberal PS'. However the PS leadership voted on Tuesday to try and reach an agreement with the LFI despite the hostility of some of the leadership, including Hidalgo, the presidential candidate. The coalition could include the PS or sections of it. No doubt the PC would be supportive of including the PS. It reinforces its argument about defending those MPs who already have seats.

One of the trickier negotiating points is whether existing left MPs should be protected. This particularly affects the PCF because Mélenchon scored really well, even over 50%, in some of these former PCF strongholds. Roussel, the PCF leader, has argued that the party still has a base, local councillors and a network of militants. He also says that tactical voting in the first round does not totally reflect the party's support on the ground. For the ecologists it is a similar argument. They did much better in local council and regional elections. It is important that the France Unbowed (LFI) and Mélenchon work flexibly to develop a real united slate which has dynamic local support committees.

## **Response of Anti-Capitalists to united left slate**

The NPA has responded positively to the overtures from the LFI and is willing to work in a united way to build this left electoral coalition. It is keen that all the forces joining the slate will have a voice in its leadership and that each current, while supporting the key points of the LFI programme will have the right to defend its ideas. The NPA accepts the need for all the currents to adhere to the same campaign profile and manifesto. Each current could take its place in the 'parliament' of the Union Populaire (the LFI election campaign). It has also stated that in the event that Mélenchon could form a government it would not wish to sit inside it but would be supportive of such a government carrying out the programme of the slate. As the statement explains this reflects

differences between the LFI and the NPA on the role of political institutions in working towards a break with capitalist rule.

Its statement also makes the point that the focus of a united campaign should not just be all around the slogan of 'Mélenchon for Prime Minister' but rather embedded in the struggles on the ground against Macron's policies. Ideally local support committees of the whole left should be sustained in united struggles on the ground beyond the elections. The continued rise of the far right requires systematic building of a stronger anti-fascist movement.

The triple polarisation we saw in the first round with the far right, the neo-liberal centre right and the broad radical left looks like it will continue to dominate the French political system unless the traditional mainstream right and left of centre parties rise like a phoenix from the ashes. For the left the hope is that a successful united campaign in the June parliamentary elections will elect enough MPs that can support mass resistance to Macron's neo liberal programme. Realistically winning a working majority for Mélenchon would be a long shot but any radical left worthy of its name has to put itself forward to govern. Macron's current has shown in previous elections that it has feet of clay and does not have a truly embedded structure in the localities. Le Pen's difficulty in forging alliances may also help the left. One big problem is to mobilise voters, abstention is even higher in parliamentary elections following the presidential one.

**Dave Kellaway**

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*"The third round starts this evening. The popular bloc which was built around my candidature is already today the third estate which can change everything if it brings people together and grows bigger"*

JEAN LUC MÉLENCHON, STATEMENT 24 APRIL

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**P.S.**

- Anti\*Capitalist Resistance. 25 Apr 2022:  
<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/macron-wins-presidency-but-left-can-fight-back-in-the-third-round-in-elections-and-the-streets/>
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